

PLANNING APPLICATION PL/26/0632
120 Kendrick Road, Reading, RG1 5DP
Response to Council comments



Dear Planning Officer,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further information in support of the proposed change of use from a Class C3 dwellinghouse to a Class C2 Residential Children's Care Home for up to two children.

The following statement responds to the matters raised in your correspondence and the comments of the Highway Authority.

1. Loss of Family dwelling policy assessment

The principal policy consideration in relation to the proposed loss of a C3 dwelling is Policy H7 (Protecting the Existing Housing Stock) of the adopted Reading Borough Local Plan, which forms the basis of this assessment. An extract of the policy is shown below:

Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

Planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area.

The proposed development would provide a specialist children's residential care home accommodating a maximum of two children in a family-based environment.

Whilst the proposal technically results in the change of use of a dwellinghouse, the property will continue to function as a residential home and retain all of the physical characteristics of a family dwelling. No extensions, external alterations or subdivision of the property are proposed.

The proposal addresses an identified and significant need for small-scale children's residential accommodation. National policy and legislation increasingly promote the provision of children's care in small domestic settings rather than institutional accommodation. The proposed use would provide a stable family-style environment for vulnerable children who are unable to live within a traditional family home.

The proposal would therefore deliver important social infrastructure and community benefits through:

- Provision of accommodation for looked-after children in a residential setting that replicates a normal family home.
- Meeting an identified regional and national need for children's care placements.

- Reducing reliance on larger institutional facilities.
- Providing local placements which enable children to remain closer to schools, support networks and community facilities.

The proposal responds directly to an identified local need for children's care accommodation. Reading Borough Council's *Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026* confirms that a key priority is to secure a sufficient and diverse range of homes within Reading to meet the needs of looked-after children and to maximise opportunities for children to remain close to their families, support networks and local services. The Strategy emphasises the provision of accommodation within Reading and acknowledges the Council's statutory sufficiency duty. Importantly, the Strategy recognises that there is currently "low sufficiency for residential homes in the Reading area", resulting in children being placed beyond 20 miles from Reading. It also identifies as a priority the need to "develop more high quality, local residential capacity that meets the needs of children and young people, including BfC run provision, and prevents the need to place at distance". Reading Borough Council's *Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026* identifies a shortage of local residential provision. The Strategy notes that 58% of looked-after children are placed outside the Borough and that 30% are accommodated more than 20 miles from Reading. Importantly, the Strategy acknowledges that "due to low sufficiency for residential homes in the Reading area, this can lead to more children being placed in homes beyond 20 miles of Reading". The proposed development would make a modest but valuable contribution towards increasing local residential capacity and reducing reliance on more distant placements. The home further addresses this identified shortfall. Through the provision of a high-quality children's home for a maximum of two children within a family-style domestic environment, the proposal would increase the availability of local residential placements, help meet an identified shortage of provision, support the Council's sufficiency objectives and reduce reliance on placements located further away from Reading.

There is a clear and continuing need for high-quality residential children's care placements in Reading, Berkshire, and the wider South East. Reading's *Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026* identifies a need to increase local placement availability so that more children can remain close to their families, schools, and support networks, while reducing reliance on costly out-of-area and independent placements. The strategy also highlights growing demand for residential care for children with increasingly complex needs. Similarly, Hampshire's *Sufficiency Duty Strategy* recognises the importance of providing sufficient local accommodation for looked-after children and is actively developing residential care provision and commissioning arrangements to improve placement availability within or near the county.

These local priorities reflect a wider national challenge, with government analysis identifying shortages of suitable residential placements, workforce pressures, and increasing competition between local authorities, all of which contribute to children being placed further from home than is desirable. As a result, there is a recognised need for additional high-quality residential provision. The proposed home in Reading has been selected to help address this demand by providing stable, therapeutic, child-centred care, enabling children to remain closer to their families, education, and support networks wherever appropriate.

Importantly, Reading's strategy specifically identifies increasing placement demand, greater complexity of needs, market insufficiencies, and an ongoing requirement for approximately 27–28 residential placements throughout the strategy period, even with planned reductions in the number of children in care.

Whilst the proposal would result in the change of use of a single dwellinghouse from Use Class C3 to Use Class C2, it is considered that exceptional circumstances exist in this case. The proposal would provide specialist accommodation for looked-after children, a recognised vulnerable group, and would directly respond to an identified need for additional local children's residential provision. Reading Borough Council's Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026 identifies "low sufficiency for residential homes in the Reading area" and includes a strategic objective to "develop more high quality, local residential capacity that meets the needs of children and young people". The proposal would therefore assist in meeting a key identified need and is precisely the type of exceptional circumstance anticipated by the supporting text to Policy H7.

2. Operational Statement and Neighbour Amenity

A detailed operational statement has been prepared in support of the application and is separately annexed to the submission.

3. Response to Highways Comments

Staffing Structure and Parking Demand

The Highway Officer's assessment is based upon the total number of employees required to operate the home rather than the number of staff present on site at any one time.

The application form identifies a staffing establishment comprising five full-time and two part-time employees. These figures reflect the total workforce required to provide continuous 24-hour care and supervision across a seven-day rota and do not represent the number of staff present simultaneously. The applicant would like to clarify that there will be two support workers on duty at all times and the Registered Manager (RM) will provide oversight of the homes overall operations on an ad hoc basis as required.

The proposed children's home will accommodate a maximum of two children and will operate with a maximum of two members of staff present at the property at any one time. Staff work on a shift basis to provide continuous care and support.

The home will be managed by a Registered Manager (RM) will provide oversight. The Registered Manager is not permanently based at the property outside normal working hours and does not generate a dedicated parking demand.

Accordingly, whilst seven employees are required across the rota, the operational parking demand is significantly lower than assumed within the Highway Officer's assessment.

Shift Patterns

The home will operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Care staff will work on a rota basis to ensure continuity of support and supervision for residents. At no time will more than two members of staff be present at the property. Staff handovers are brief and managed to minimise vehicle movements and potential disturbance. The shift system has been designed to provide stability and consistency for the children while reducing staff turnover throughout the day.

Parking Provision

The property benefits from three off-street parking spaces within the curtilage.

Given that:

- The home accommodates only two children;
- A maximum of two members of staff will be present at any one time;
- Staff work extended shifts rather than frequent shift rotations;
- Family visits will not take place at the home, all family contact will be arranged at the family home, community centre or other suitable public locations such as parks depending on the arrangements agreed with the Social Worker.

It is considered that the existing parking provision is sufficient to accommodate the operational requirements of the use.

The proposal therefore differs significantly from a nursing home, where multiple staff members, visitors and resident-related vehicle movements may occur simultaneously.

The anticipated parking demand associated with the proposed use is materially lower and more closely reflects that of a family dwelling.

Cycle Parking

The applicant is willing to provide secure and covered cycle parking within the site in accordance with the requirements of the Reading Parking Standards and Design SPD. A revised site plan can be submitted showing a secure cycle store capable of accommodating a minimum of two bicycles.

Refuse Storage and Collection

Refuse and recycling will continue to be managed in accordance with existing domestic collection arrangements. A dedicated bin storage area can be identified on a revised site layout plan within 15 metres of the site access, in accordance with the Council's requirements.

The scale of waste generated by a maximum of two children and two staff members is expected to be comparable to that arising from a typical family household.

The proposed use operates on a very small scale and should not be assessed as a conventional institutional care facility. The home accommodates only two children and will have a maximum of two staff members present at any one time. As a consequence, the operational parking demand is substantially lower than that assumed from the total staffing establishment. The existing parking provision, together with the proposed cycle storage and refuse arrangements, is considered sufficient to accommodate the needs of the development without adversely affecting highway safety or parking conditions within the local area.

4. Conclusion

The proposed change of use of 120 Kendrick Road from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a children's residential care home (Use Class C2) will provide an important community facility for a recognised vulnerable group whilst retaining the property's domestic character and appearance.

The additional information submitted demonstrates that the home will operate on a small scale, accommodating a maximum of two children within a family-style environment. Staffing arrangements are carefully managed, with a maximum of two staff members present at any one time, ensuring that the level of activity remains comparable to that of a typical family dwelling. The operational arrangements, visitor management procedures, safeguarding measures and noise management provisions collectively ensure that neighbouring residential amenity will be protected.

In relation to Policy H7, the proposal responds directly to an identified local need for children's residential accommodation. Reading Borough Council's own Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy 2024–2026 identifies a shortage of local residential provision and recognises the need to develop additional high-quality residential capacity within Reading to prevent children being placed at a distance from their communities and support networks. The proposal will make a modest but valuable contribution towards meeting this identified need and assisting the Council in fulfilling its statutory sufficiency duty.

In respect of highways matters, the parking demand associated with the use is significantly lower than originally assumed, as the staffing figures submitted within the application form represent the total number of employees required to operate the service across a 24-hour rota rather than the number of staff present simultaneously. The property benefits from off-street parking, whilst opportunities for secure cycle parking and refuse storage can be provided in accordance with the Council's requirements.

Overall, the proposal represents a sustainable and appropriate form of development that:

- Provides essential accommodation for vulnerable children.

- Addresses an identified local need for children's residential placements.
- Maintains the residential character of the property and surrounding area.
- Operates in a manner comparable to a family home.
- Safeguards neighbouring amenity.
- Does not give rise to unacceptable highway or parking impacts.

For the reasons set out within the application documents, Operational Statement and supporting information, it is respectfully considered that the proposal accords with the objectives of national and local planning policy and that there are clear material considerations which justify the proposed change of use. Accordingly, the applicant respectfully requests that planning permission is granted.